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Duxbury Clipper

Thumbs up for new crematory

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN, CLIPPER STAFF
SUSANNA@DUXBURYCLIPPER.COM

A \$2.5 million plan to replace and relocate the crematory in the Mayflower cemetery met with enthusiastic approval from the Board of Selectmen Monday night.

The Crematory Building Committee unveiled its proposal to build a new combined crematory and office building in the back of the cemetery, with access through the cemetery and off Mayflower Street.

The project will be presented to Town Meeting for a vote in March. If approved, it will be on the town election ballot to be funded as a debt exclusion, or a temporary property tax increase. Because of this, the article must receive a two-thirds vote to pass at the annual Town Meeting.

The new crematory would be 3,000 square feet and the office would measure 1,300 square feet, said David Crispin of the BSC Group of Boston, the consultant hired to plan the new crematory. This is larger than the current 2,000 square foot crematory and 1,000 square foot office.

Drawings show a Cape Cod-style, dormered office building clad in natural shingles attached to a larger shingled building. The crematory would have four retorts, or machines into which a casket goes for cremation. It would

Department of Public Works director Peter Buttkus. The crematory is now the busiest in Massachusetts and the third busiest in North America, he said. The crematory and cemetery are part of the DPW.

Buttkus said the town needs a new crematory because the current facility is old and outdated and the town has outgrown it. Over 3,600 cremations are done in Duxbury each year, Buttkus said.

"It has reached the end of its useful life," said Buttkus.

"The retorts are used to say the least," added Crispin.

The new retorts would be more efficient than the current ones and thus provide more capacity for more cremations.

Remodeling or expanding the existing building is not possible, said Buttkus, because a new facility would need to be larger to meet current standards and there is no room at that site to build one as it is surrounded by graves, which have been developed over the last thirty years.

Moving the building to another section of the cemetery makes sense, Buttkus said, because it gets the crematory operations away from the graves and adds to the overall peacefulness of the cemetery. If the project is approved, the current crematory building will be demolished and eventually that land will be used for more

the current one lacks sufficient space for operating the crematory. There is not enough room to meet with families and to store the crematory records. Also, the building is not handicapped accessible and many of their clients are elderly. Having the office next to the crematory is "critical to the success of the facility," said Buttkus.

Crispin said he expects the cremation rate to continue to increase as it has for the past twenty years. In 1990, Crispin said the cremation rate was 15 percent. For 2010, it will be 35 percent, and in twenty years, Crispin said it will be at 55 percent.

"The business is pretty secure as far as the future is concerned," he said.

The new crematory will pay for itself and also make the town money, said Crispin. Last year, the crematory returned over \$600,000 in revenue to the town, according to Crispin. He said the new crematory will run in a "non-deficit situation from day one." This means that the crematory will continue to provide the same, if not more, revenue to the town, which will cover the town's costs of borrowing money for the project. It is expected the town will use a 15-year bond to pay for the new crematory. At the end of the 15 years, Crispin said the town will have received rev-